

# GORE GAZETTE

FREE Your Bi-Weekly Guide To Horror, Exploitation And Gore In The N.Y. Metro Area No.1

## YES, WE ARE A RIP-OFF!

Those of you in Manhattan who have just picked this up are no doubt screaming, "Gore Gazette? What a rip-off! Looks like the Sullivans are copping Bill Landis' Sleazoid Express verbatim!" Well, we are and rightly so... Earlier this year, when the ol' S.E. first cropped up around Lower Manhattan, we felt it was the best thing that happened for horror films in the area since WOR started re-playing The Creeping Terror. It was just what the trash connoisseur ordered--reviews of the new horror/sleaze flicks around town and warnings about bombs to avoid. But very slowly, the S.E. began to change--Landis may have begun hanging around with Andrew Sarris, Jonas Mekas or others from that dreaded circle of "lobster" critics--we noticed that his reviews were becoming increasingly critical and unfairly analytical of a genre of films that just don't hold up to that style of criticism and were never made to. Last month when Landis trashed Mothers Day (probably the best gore flick and comedy of 1980) we knew it was all over... How long would it be before the title of this great little rag would change from The Sleazoid Express to The Effite Snob Express?

Determined not to let this happen, we hereby give birth to The Gore Gazette. Dedicated to Bill Landis and the S.E. that once was, we hope to continue the tradition of reporting on the new shock/schlock crop in the area: praising the deliciously disgusting but warning against the many dubbed duds and abysmal abominations that abound to fleece many a horror film fan of his hard-earned \$3.50. But above all--we promise never to take ourselves too seriously and begin to Landisize our scandal sheet.

## EATERS SHINES; DEMON Z-Z-Z-Z

We were somewhat wary of going in to see the double-bill Blood Eaters and Night of the Demon which opened to a scant few area theaters last week. Both the newspaper ads and posters outside the theater suggested that they might be two of those Italian import stinkers (cheap poster art; no cast or credits listed, etc.) Surprisingly, Blood Eaters turned out to be a very Gory, coherently made American quickie. It concerns a gang of outlaw marijuana farmers who get their crop dusted by a top secret, experimental FBI herbicide. This weed killer turns the farmers into zombie-like, blood-starved ghouls who roam the countryside with axes, machetes, knives, and torches butchering and devouring any campers or townsfolk they happen to meet up with. Graphic carve-up scenes and oh-so-awful acting make Blood Eaters one of those rare gems straight out of the I Drink Your Blood mold of a decade ago. Neat surprise: look closely during the film for John Amplas (Martin) who has a small supporting role as a youthful FBI agent. In short, Blood Eaters is great stuff! Not so for its co-feature... Night of the Demon is a re-titled old 1971 film which I do not readily recognize concerning puppy love between a teenage witch and a playboy drifter (played by the oldest-looking adolescent since John Ashley) with strange goings on at her family farm. It got so boring that we left after  $\frac{1}{2}$  hour, but at the very least it seemed to be a technically OK American-made film. If anyone out there can provide me with the original 1971 title of this flick I will send them a great old horror film still for their trouble. Again, try to catch Blood Eaters while you still can. It was released by an obscure releasing company, so it may not surface again in the area for a long time.

Well, it looks like too much editorializing ate up all the review room this month... We'll be back on Nov. 15 with an all review issue featuring Fade To Black, Schizoid, Motel Hell, and Joe Dante's The Howling. In the interim, direct all fan mail, correspondence, hate letters, etc. to Gore Gazette c/o Sullivan 73 N. Fullerton Ave., Montclair, N.J. 07042. All criticism welcome. If you want G.G. mailed to your house, enclose \$5 for postage to cover 1 yr.

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## MOTEL HELL: CALHOUN NO LEATHERFACE

It is very difficult for us to condemn Motel Hell for its many shortcomings when it stands as a landmark film venture. M.H. marks the very first time a major production/releasing company (UA) has seen fit to lay out a large amount of money (\$3 million) for a movie whose plot, characterizations, and setting are straight out of a poverty-row grindhouse epic. We've all seen films of this ilk before--Country farmer Vincent Smith and his sister Ida make their living selling smoked meats; monopolizing the area market because of their special "secret" ingredient. Anyone with even half a sense for the twisted could guess that this secret ingredient is none other than good old human flesh. During the past decade, there have been far better cannibal flicks released (Texas Chainsaw, Folks At Red Wolf Inn, Undertaker and his Pals, the uncut Tender Flesh, etc.), all of them greatly more graphic in their depiction of butchering than M.H. and each made for about one sixth the cost. Rory Calhoun tries hard at achieving a successful balance between Norman Bates and Leatherface, but he unfortunately falls short of either. Nina Axlerod as Smith's nubile love interest is just plain corny. But M.H. has some redeeming virtues--since it is the first "big-budget" gore flick, it naturally has excellent photography, taut editing, and great special effects (check out those oozing scars on potential sausages after Vincent slits their vocal cords.) But more importantly, M.H. resurrects the classic style of late-50's AIP humor that is so dumb it becomes funny. Dick Miller and Johnathan Haze-type characters abound throughout the flick, carrying it through its many dull spots. We're told that after UA execs screen-

ed M.H. they were so apalled and confused by it they insisted it be marketed as a comedy (hence the "you just might die laughing" campaign.) Well, it ain't that funny---but a sincere congratulations to UA for finally discovering the old "tits and blood" secret for making a fast buck and an entertaining, but shaky gore flick.

## HORROR ESPANOL

Fans who are really hard up for some cheap sleaze might try checking out the Ciné Theater on 7th Ave. and 48th St. This is a clean, quiet theater which shows only Spanish films, with no English subtitles. They do, however, get quite a few horror flicks which either never show up in regular venues or emerge on Channel 9 in a dubbed, heavily edited form. Don't confuse Spanish films with those dreaded Italian imports--most Spanish releases are sadistic little low budget sagas, heavy on torture and explicit violence. This week Ciné is showing La Marca Del Hombre Lobo (The Mark of the Wolfman) starring Spain's reigning horror king Paul Naschy. La Marca is a neat little tale made in 1968 concerning Naschy inheriting the werewolf curse, ripping up local villagers and unknowingly going to a vampire doctor to be cured of his affliction. Highlight: Naschy attacks a young peasant girl, ripping off the side of her face with his teeth and then drooling saliva, blood and flesh in full view of the camera. Great Stuff!! This film was issued in a heavily edited, horribly jumbled, hideously dubbed English version (sans gore) in 1972 under the title Frankenstein's Bloody Terror. Apt title considering no mention of Frankenstein is made throughout the entire film... La Marca is coherent, fairly well-directed and all the blood and guts are intact. In fact, this original Spanish version makes more sense than the 1972 version in which English is spoken!

## LEWIS FESTIVAL AT MONSTER MOVIE CLUB

All students of blood, gore, and violence should be in attendance at the Monster Movie Club, 57 St. Mark's Place, on November 25 at 9:00 PM when two of those ever-elusive Herschell Gordon Lewis films will be shown. 2000 Maniacs begins at 9:00 and Color Me Blood Red will be shown at 11:00. For the uninformed, Lewis is the man who pioneered the use of explicit violence and severe maiming during the mid-sixties in a series of low-budget psycho epics which were initially banned in many states. In an early-70's inter-

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## THE BOOGEY MAN WILL GET YOU!

Try to imagine a film which begins with a carbon-copy prologue of Halloween, then mid-way chucks this whole plotline for a tenuous rehash of The Exorcist while throwing in a few grisly murders that look like rejected out-takes from Friday the 13th. A little rough to envision? Well, you should try watching it...

The Boogey Man is just that, a confusing mish-mash of tired old plotlines and predictable shock attempts so awful that one might guess Edward Wood Jr. had returned from the grave to make a Plan 9 for the 80's. Not so. Producer Jerry Gross (I Drink Your Blood, Zombie) is the guy to blame for this fast-buck dud which opened to area theaters last Friday. Not only is the title and ad campaign misleading, (the "boogey man" is never mentioned throughout the flick-but if he is I stand corrected since the sound recording of this epic is barely audible at best) but the editing is choppy, the acting is abominable and the special effects laughable. (All the blood looks exactly like transmission fluid; it is embarrassingly obvious that the priest who gets knifed when he is sent to "exorcise the demon" has a thick piece of wood under his frock to hold the dagger in place, etc.) Apparently most of the film's budget was spent on hiring John Carradine for one day's work-he appears briefly as a consulting psychiatrist in what must be his zillionth role in a dead-end loser.

This film almost falls into the "so terrible its entertaining" category, but it has so many long, boring and endlessly talky stretches and dull subplots that it even misses out on being acceptable in terms of sheer ineptitude. The Boogey Man will get you, alright----for about \$3.50-4.00! Avoid this one at all costs!

## CHOP CHOP!

Fans of gory and sadistic violence may be entertained by Shogun Assassin, the latest entry in the exploitation sweepstakes from Roger Corman's New World Pictures. This film is not your run-of-the mill kung-fu cheapie--in fact it is one of a series of 19 well-made samurai epics filmed in Japan concerning an expelled executioner who roams the countryside with his infant son in tow in a wooden baby carriage. Known as "the baby-cart series" in Japan, all these films are lavishly produced by the prestigious Toho Co. and usually run at an average length of 2½ hours. What the wizards at New World did was to take one of these films (Baby-cart At The River Styx), chop it down to 86 minutes and devise a plot through horrendous dubbing to cash in on the current Shogun craze. Our narrator throughout the film is none other than the baby himself who continually spouts oriental philosophy whilst dad dismembers about half of the evil shogun's army with his never-ending supply of concealed samurai swords. Shogun Assassin is great entertainment though impossible to follow--the action jumps from a forest to a ship to a desert to snowy mountains and back with no explanation. Also, the dubbed dialogue sounds like it was both written and delivered by fifth graders. But the gore is top-notch; heads are split wide open, ears sliced off, eyes gouged, arms and legs cleaved, arteries punctured, etc. in a non-stop bloodbath that'll let anybody forget what a contrived and jumbled mess it really is. A few purists may complain that the gore is too exaggerated, (most of the sword wounds inflicted cause geysers of blood to shoot five feet in the air) but we found Shogun Assassin to be first-rate, mindless entertainment and recommend it. Added Bonus: Since the film takes place in 14th century Japan, the folks at New World added a quasi-disco soundtrack composed by Mark Lindsay (yes, that one) for some real authentic period feel... Great for additional laughs.

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## CAVEAT EMPTOR DEPT.

During the past two weeks, poverty-row theaters in the N.Y./N.J. area have been inundated with a mass of mildly entertaining, mediocre, and sub-par genre flicks ranging from import rip-offs to hard core pornography. None could be entirely recommended, but a few may be of interest to die-hard sleaze connoisseurs. Below are brief descriptions of the 5 releases, but as this article's title warns, let the "viewer" beware!

The Co-ed Murders- Another from the seemingly unending string of abominable Italian-made psycho murder mysteries, horribly dubbed into English. Made in 1974, this mess concerns a series of murders that take place in a girl's school in Rome and is short on gore and long on talky exposition and macho Italian detectives. We were able to last about 55 minutes.

Invasion of the Blood Farmers- Sharing the same bill with Co-ed at most theaters, Blood Farmers has remained one of our favorite films since its initial release back in 1972. Ed Adlum (Shriek of the Mutilated) directed this gem about the evil Sangroid druid cult on the loose in upstate New York searching for the correct blood type to revive their dead queen. Not being true vampires, these "farmers" are forced to hook kidnapped victims up to air compressors to extract their blood which is needed for sustenance. Hilariously, this blood extraction process sounds exactly like a kid who is sucking the bottom of his empty soda glass with a straw. Add to this: enjoyably wretched acting, overdone makeup, quarts of the phoniest blood you've ever seen, and an effeminate head villian who makes Truman Capote look like Clint Eastwood. In short, Blood Farmers is 76 minutes of grade Z, fast-moving, entertaining trash; a sort of horror genre Beyond The Valley Of The Dolls.

Dracula Exotica- For those who like hard-core porn mixed with their gore, Dracula Exotica is a well-made, beautifully photographed epic which contains far more more skin than blood. Director Allan Schwartz takes sizable liberties with the Stoker legend (this Dracula doesn't always suck the neck, etc.) and the film tends to become monotonous with its many overlong graphic sex interludes, but it does have enough effective violence (bloody floggings, stabbings, bitings, etc.) to sustain interest for its entire 90 minute running time.

The Slasher (Is The Sex Maniac)- Italian stinker #2! The notorious William Mishkin bought the rights to yet another psycho murder dud, dubbed in the English and (now get this) "Americanized" all the actors names on the posters and credits so that innocent suckers like us will throw down our \$3.50 and realize we've been duped only after we get inside the theater. Token American Farley Granger stars with a bunch of unknown Guidos in a story about a masked assailant who stalks and slices up adulterous women in yet another contrived whodunit. Some cute throat and breast carve-up scenes make The Slasher slightly better than Co-ed Murders, but they are few and far between and hardly make up for its plodding pace.

Nazi Love Camp 27- A sleazy exploitationer chock full of torture, humiliation, violence, sex, and decadence set inside a concentration brothel during WWII. A bit lacking on graphic gore and the subject matter may offend some- but we found the film mildly entertaining and good for a few laughs.

Thanks to everyone who has written kind letters of encouragement on our first 3 issues--more of this and we're sure to be around a long time. Question: Has anyone out there ever seen an obscure old Tor Johnson flick called The Beast of Yucca Flats? If so, please write and tell me when and where. I'll send you a still for your trouble.

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HAVE A HOLIDAY FEAST ON US.....



NOTHING IN THE  
ANNALS OF HORROR  
QUITE LIKE IT!

Screenplay by  
A. Louise Downe

Box Office Spectaculars, Inc.  
presents

## "The BLOOD FEAST"

MORE GRISLY THAN EVER IN BLOOD COLOR!

Introducing  
PLAYMATE  
Connie Mason  
A Friedman-Lewis  
Production

We'd like to wish all our readers a happy holiday season with a juicy shot from the grand-daddy of all gore flicks, Blood Feast (1963). Response to our newsletter has been enthusiastic, so we'll be back the first week of '81 with more news/reviews on area horror activity. During the coming new year, you can pick up your free copy of The Gore Gazette at any of the following locations:

Yesterday's Books & Records, 545 Bloomfield Ave., Montclair, N.J.

Cinemabilia, 10 W. 13th St., New York, N.Y.

Club 57, 57 St. Mark's Pl., New York, N.Y.

Plasback Records, 32 St. Mark's Pl., New York, N.Y.

East Side Book Store, 34 St. Mark's Pl., New York, N.Y.

Village Comic Art Shop, 319 Avenue of the Americas, New York, N.Y.

Pellet Records, 42 Park Pl., Morristown, N.J.

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## ALTERED STATES: RETURN OF MONSTER ON CAMPUS

Since its initial premiere in the New York area on Christmas week, Altered States has become a major source of controversy within critic's circles. On one side is the camp who feel that the film is "a stunningly visual, deeply personal thriller of the highest calibre", and go on to praise the fluid direction of Ken Russell and the uniquely original Paddy Chayefsky (Sidney Aaron) screenplay." The other faction has called Altered States "heavy-handed, prosaic and inane; directed by Russell in his usual frantic style; a total waste of time and money"...

Well, we don't totally agree with either side---after all the pro/con bantering, it seems that most of our prestigious film critics have ignored the obvious: Altered States is merely a mega-bucks hybrid of 1957's Monster On Campus, Roger Corman's 1967 The Trip, and the mid-60's TV series The Outer Limits. The plot? Eccentric Harvard college professor/research scientist William Hurt (easily the 80's answer to John Agar with his laughable wooden acting) feels that he can unlock the secrets of man's primordial instincts through a concoction of psychedelic Mexican mushrooms and sensory deprivation. He gets more than he bargains for when the mushrooms turn him into a Neanderthal ape man who roams the city streets terrorizing citizens and devouring animals at the city zoo. Of course, Hurt's colleagues and wife are worried about these drastic experiments and their eventual effect on his well-being, but their concerns fall on deaf ears as the ol' prof becomes more and more obsessed with tripping off into monkeyland. See what we mean? This plot is not unlike the aforementioned MOC where professor Arthur Frantz smokes the blood of a prehistoric fish and also turns into a caveman-killer-on-the-loose. Of course with the multi-million dollar budget Russell had to work with, Altered States' Neanderthal is far more realistic-looking than Frantz's rubber monkey mask (thanks to first-rate make-up by veteran Dick Smith), and the hallucinatory sequences make Corman's The Trip look like amateur night at the head shop. But however glossy Altered looks with its 70mm scope and ear-splitting Dolby sound, it still feels and looks like a quicky "B" film from the halycon days of the 50's & 60's. Which is fine by us, we thoroughly enjoyed the film with that assumption in mind. There are enough segments of blood and guts to keep us gore fans satisfied, much nudity to liven things up, and the dumbest dialog heard in a major-budget film in over a year to keep us well-entertained through the film's occasional slow spots.

As an added bonus, Russell adds a fifteen minute ending to his film which is straight out of any Outer Limits episode of the 60's. Not wanting to ruin this late development for any potential viewers, just keep in mind the "love and understanding conquers all" moral motif which permeated most of the episodes of that TV series; also think of the "monster from the television screen" that appeared in the very first episode back in 1963. Keeping this in mind, you should feel a strong sense of deja vu during this final segment of the flick.

In short, we highly recommend Altered States as a good, monster-on-the-loose thriller and not much more. We urge anyone planning on seeing it to keep this in thought and not take the film too seriously---you should get quite a kick out of it. Just imagine you're watching some low budget quickie called, say, Return of the Monster On Campus and instead of being at the sterile, snobbish Loew's Astor, you're nestled into a stiff, greasy, slimy seat at the Lyric on 42nd St. If you can imagine such, you'll not consider your \$5.00 admission price wasted.

Quick bits: Joe Dante's long-awaited The Howling will be long-awaited a little while longer; post-production problems on some animation sequences have postponed its release date until mid-March. The film was originally intended for Halloween release... Avoid current exploitationer The Slavers at all costs. Word of mouth had it to be a grim, brutal torture epic but its just a confused, boring account of slave trading in 1860's Africa. Highlights: A few heads are blown apart by Ray Milland as an Arao (?) slave trapper and Cameron Mitchell as a Portuguese slaver who brags to Ron Ely about how he forces black slave girls into having sex with his horse. Flick is a haven for over a half dozen down and out actors. Yechhh... Still no word from anyone out there who has seen The Beast Of Yucca Flats (1961). Free still is still offered to anyone who can tell me more about it aside from an oblique reference in an old Famous Monsters...

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## DYING FROM THIRST

About 15 minutes into Thirst the film seems to really have a lot going for it. It looks glossy and technically well-made, the acting is pretty good, and the plot shows much promise in presenting a refreshing variation on the well worn vampire/blood drinker formula of a hundred other films. But shortly after this initial build-up, Thirst shifts into low gear where it remains for the balance of the flick; becoming just another statistic in the long list of endlessly talky, scathingly boring British horror thrillers. Only David Hemmings maintains interest throughout in his role as the head scientist of a vampire dairy farm nestled deep in the English countryside. Together with about a dozen others, Hemmings & Co. kidnap youthful specimens and daily "process" their blood (in a manner similarly seen in the great Invasion of the Blood Farmers) for distribution throughout the world to around 200 of the "chosen ones" (modern-day vampires who realize that human blood is the key to immortality.) A sub-plot develops when one of Hemming's colleagues discovers that a young British woman is unknowingly a great-granddaughter of the notorious Countess Bathory (the real-life "Countess Dracula" who drank and bathed in the blood of virgins to preserve her youth). Since this girl possesses "the purest blood-line of all the chosen ones", the directors of the farm abduct her and try to awaken the true vampire heritage buried within her. Of course, this is against the girl's wishes and throughout the movie she tries to escape the farm---until slowly (through torture and brainwashing) the spirit of her ancestry takes over and she finds herself thirsting for blood as well. Sounds like a pretty good, original plot, doesn't it? So did we, but as the flick progresses it gets increasingly boring and dumber by the minute. Some examples of the latter include: the blood which is shipped out of the farm is neatly packaged in one-quart containers labeled "Milk"; after being "processed" the young farm prisoners walk around zombie-like in hospital pajamas---with large hickeys on their necks; and finally, occasionally one of the resident vampires gets the urge to obtain human blood straight from the source (Dracula-style), but to do this they must first put on bridgework fangs over their real teeth!! See what we mean.. The gore is very realistic in the film and there are some highly effective scenes (including a blood-spraying shower, etc.), but between rambling exposition, endless dream sequences, and a

convoluted story-line Thirst seems like it is about 3 hours long despite its brief 86 minute running time. As such, we can't recommend it for either its scant segments of violence or its entertaining dumbness.

## SCANNERS: A SUCCESS

Despite the fact that Scanners borrows heavily from Brian De Palma's The Fury (almost plagiarously so), David Cronenberg's newest epic is a resounding success which should finally place him in the "boy wonder" league of directors along with Carpenter, Landis, and the aforementioned De Palma. More of an espionage/sci-fi adventure than an outright horror flick, Scanners concerns a strain of 237 individuals who possess super telekinetic powers enabling them to inflict severe pain and mind control on us normal homo sapiens. Depending on the scanner's mood, this pain can be as mild as a simple nose-bleed or so intense that a person's brain can explode clean out of his head. Of course, some scanners are good and others are bad. The bad ones want to control the world. With this simple premise, Cronenberg takes us on a whirlwind jaunt for the next 100 odd minutes as "good" scanners (controlled by a mysterious corporation) clash with the crazed rebel scanners. Scanners unfolds fast and furious and is the closest thing I've seen yet to watching a comic book on screen. The plot develops and thickens so quickly that a few minor story-line inconsistencies are soon forgotten in an attempt to keep up with the breakneck speed of the film. Patrick McGoohan is great as the emotionless corporate director of the scanner program, but the real praise has to be heaped on Micheal Ironside who plays Daryl Revok, the leader of the "bad" scanners band, in a character so maniacal he looks and sounds as if he stepped out of an E.C. comic book from the 50's. Fans of blood and guts might be slightly disappointed in Scanners as compared to Cronenberg's other classics (Rabid, The Brood, They Came...), the gore volume is way down. However, a great scene early in the film and one of the goriest, grossest endings we've seen in a long time should more than make up for the expected steady flow of blood-letting we've come to expect from ol' Dave. Remember, quality is not always quantity.. See Scanners now!!

Note: Maniac, which promises to be one of the sickest and depraved films to be released this year opens to area theaters on Jan. 30.

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## WHATEVER HAPPENED TO JERRY GROSS?

It's hard to believe that a man who just a short decade ago helped pioneer the use of explicit gore and sadism in film has now reduced himself to becoming one of the worst of the hack producers currently operating in the horror genre. Who are we referring to? None other than Mr. Jerry Gross. Back in the early 1970's, Gross headed up Cinematron, a fledgling film production/releasing company based in New York. During its short life span, it churned out a good number of bloody, violent classics such as I Drink Your Blood, From Ear To Ear, etc., all of which displayed wild, depraved plots and large amounts of blood and guts. Critical and public response was almost always negative to Gross---he was constantly reviled for his disgusting movies and repugnant ad campaigns. Gross never gave an inch, however, and ignored all the criticism and actively fought censorship of many of his films at both state and federal levels. (I Drink Your Blood was the first film ever handed an X rating by the MPAA for violence content alone; Gross eventually appealed this rating and got it changed to an R without making any cuts.) But soon Cinematron found itself out of business and all gore purists lamented the loss of Jerry Gross throughout the balance of the '70's. For about seven years, the film world heard nothing from him until early in this decade a new company called the Jerry Gross Organization announced some forthcoming titles to be released in late '80/early '81. Overflowing with excitement, we wondered what slick items Gross could have cooked up during his seven-year hiatus. When Zombie (the first JGO release) opened to summer theaters with a resounding thud, we decided to give Jerry another chance. After all, it was one of those awful Italian imports and everybody knows what stinkers they are. Everybody's entitled to at least one mistake, right? We waited until the fall, when Gross released The Boogey Man. Strike 2. (See G.G. #3 for full details.) Well, now it looks like Jerry has struck out... With the release of Blood Beach, Gross has outdone himself: this lick is worse than both Zombie and The Boogey Man combined. Blood Beach revives a horror film style that was greatly put to rest in the 50's with flicks like The Monster From The Ocean Floor and others of that ilk. This style is called the "let's not show the monster until the very end of the film and then give it under one minute screen time" style. That about sums up the entire story of this noxiously dull, wretchedly-produced loser. Residents of a California coastal community are being killed by something in the sand that gorelessly sucks them under the beach. We later find out that this something is a kind of giant fan worm which hungers for human blood. But until this "mystery" is revealed to us in the final reel, we have to sit through 80-odd minutes of John Saxon playing a hard-nosed detective bullying his crew, Burt Young (remember when he was the critic's favorite in Rocky? What happened, Burt?) as his neo-mongoloid assistant and Marjane Hill as a horny divorcee who tries to rekindle an old flame with the local coast guard. Yecch! Saxon seems to be the current contender for this year's "Cameron Mitchell Award" in that he has lead-panned his way through more abysmal productions this past year than any other has-been actor.) To illustrate just how badly made Blood Beach is, a friend of ours who viewed the film at a theater with a large, full-sized screen observed that the boom mike dropped into the film frame so frequently it had the audience cheering every time it appeared. "In fact," he told us, "the boom mike has about triple the screen time that the monster has!" So that's the story, Jerry... Blood Beach is boring, inept and nearly bloodless. In fact, if the few scant scenes of bloodletting were excised, Blood Beach would look exactly like one of the made-for-TV abominations currently glutting the airwaves. It's sad to think that Gross, who as a producer was one time in a league with George Romero and H.G. Lewis is now joining the ranks of horror rip-off kings like William Mishkin and Joseph Brenner. Such a shame...

## IN PRAISE OF MANIAC!

The long-awaited Maniac! has proved to be every bit as good as pre-release blurbs promised it would. Featuring excellent gore visual effects by Tom Savini (Dawn Of The Dead) and luridly sick acting by Joe Spinell in the title role, Maniac! concerns itself with a mother-possessed psychotic who gets his kicks out of brutally murdering both men and women. As an added highlight, most of the women murdered are subsequently stripped and scalped by the crazed Frank Zito (Spinell) who then brings both clothes and hair home where they are applied to department store mannequins which clutter his filthy apartment. Nothing is left to the imagination in this first-rate production. The audience gets to see nearly every scalping, strangling, throat-slashing, stabbing and shooting, all of which gush with realistic torrents of blood. The flick even maintains a delicate balance of humor as Zito temporarily sheds his psycho personality to become a bumbling "macho man" who has romantic designs on ex-Hammer cutie Caroline Munro. Although fairly similar to a 1974 film called Deranged, Maniac! transcends its predecessor by not becoming bogged down in "police man-hunt" sub-plot which was common to that film and all others of this type. We're interested in the critic's response to this film since it has very haunting, brooding camera work and typifies nearly every element of film "noir" continually praised by the dreaded circle of "lobster" reviewers. Our guess is that they'll hate it. But don't be put off by any bad reviews: Maniac is superb; the ultimate gorefest. And Joe Spinell can quote us on that...

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No. 9

## FEAR THIS MOVIE

For about a year and a half now, horror film magazines have been dutifully reporting on the progress of (then) 23 year old Frank La Loggia in his attempt to write, finance, produce and direct a movie project in his home town of Rochester, N.Y. Early last year, Avco Embassy Pictures stepped in to give Frank a hand, enabling him to wrap up the film late last summer for a budget of around \$800,000. Well, as much as we like to support aspiring "whiz kids" and low budget horror productions, we have to admit that Frank's long-awaited Fear No Evil, which opened to area theaters two weeks ago, is a confusing, boring failure. From the outset of the film it looks exactly like a skid row rip-off of The Omen as it chronicles the story of a young man named Andrew who, from birth, is destined to be the anti-Christ (yawn) and bring destruction and devastation to all those who cross his path. Of course, Andrew doesn't realize his satanic heritage and he spends the balance of the flick looking confused and frightened as his parents are driven insane and his classmates killed because of his evil power. And then suddenly, (for no apparent reason) young Andrew "realizes" who he is. He then dons a phony-looking Dracula cape and sets about destroying the local Passion Play (while in progress) as well as summoning up a legion of fake-looking zombies to trash a party being held by his classmate tormentors. Eventually, an old woman from the same town realizes that she and a local teen girl are really angels from heaven sent to earth to combat the evil Andrew. Well, then the two women pool their powers, corner Andrew at a large oak tree and brandish a huge gold crucifix which bathes the satanic brat in an eerie glow. End of Andrew, and the world is once again saved from evil... What a waste of time and effort! In all fairness to Frank, for a first directoral effort on an extremely low budget, Fear No Evil is fairly well photographed and directed, and the occasional gore effects are entertaining. Where the real weaknesses lie are in the scripting, dialogue, and soundtrack of the film. We've been subjected to so many Omen/Exorcist rehashes that to unleash another on the movie-going public is ludicrous. Fear gets so bogged down in long scenes of pretentious religious dialogue and background that it could cause even the staunchest horror film fan to nod out from acute boredom. And as a final blow, La Loggia uses a new wave soundtrack throughout many of the scenes which serves to make the film seem even sillier (i.e., as Andrew hatefully

glares at a student who has been taunting him, Frank inserts "Anarchy In The U.K." into the soundtrack and shows a close-up of Andrew's face just as Johnny Rotten sneers his "I am an anti-christ" line.) Since La Loggia does show a certain degree of promise as a director and a flair for convincing special effects, we can only hope that next time around he chooses a much more original plot and lets somebody else write the script.

## A HEART-RENDING FILM

You gotta hand it to Paramount Pictures- they took a real chance releasing a sick, demented flick like My Bloody Valentine to local theaters on the actual week of Valentine's Day. Since this holiday is traditionally a time for sentimentality and romance, one might wonder why a major releasing company would offer for holiday viewing a film about a crazed miner who rips people's hearts out with a pick-axe and then stuffs the bloody organs into valentine candy boxes which are subsequently delivered to various townsfolk, accompanied with twisted greeting cards. Well, we don't know the logic behind their marketing strategy, but we certainly aren't complaining about it. My Bloody Valentine is 90 fast minutes of non-stop, gruesome entertainment featuring the aforementioned "heart deliveries", plus a body stuffed into a hot laundromat dryer, a young teen's head dunked in a pot of scalding water, a girl skewered on a shower pipe and a torn-out heart being boiled in a pot of hot dogs. Great stuff, and all displayed with ample amounts of realistic blood and gore. Nitpickers may disclaim Valentine as being a blatant steal from Halloween, but when a film is this much fun, who cares? Basically, the plot is the same: A raving maniac miner who went on a killing spree during a Valentine's Day celebration twenty years ago suddenly reappears in 1981 and begins a new series of "heart rip-outs" two days before the holiday Valentine ball is slated to begin. Next to every butchered cadaver is found a warning to "cancel the dance or the killings will continue." You can take it from there... Fast-paced direction, fluid photography, taut editing and a twist ending all add to the impact of this excellent Canadian import. Some viewers may find the acting to be quite banal, but My Bloody Valentine carries enough shocks and creates enough tension that it shouldn't bother anyone for long. Highly recommended.

## GORE GAZETTE

FREE Your Bi-Weekly Guide To Horror, Exploitation And Gore In The N.Y. Metro Area No.10

## HALLOWEEN HORROR HOAX

Although we're only 3 months into 1981, our pick for "Blatant Rip-Off Of The Year Award" will undoubtedly go to The Day After Halloween, an ill-conceived, pretentious mess currently passing itself off as a horror film at area theatres. Made during 1980 in Australia by the same production company that gave us the so-so Thirst (see GG #7), Day After does little more than chronicle the corruption of an innocent young hairdresser as she enters the sleazy world of photographic modeling. Doesn't sound too much like a horror flick, you say? We'll you're right... It isn't. There is no mention of Halloween (the film or the holiday), no butcher knife-wielding psycho (as depicted in the film's misleading ad campaign), almost no gore (a slightly bloody mouth & nose), and no suspense or terror whatsoever in this loser. Day After can be best described as a film adaptation of a Jacqueline Susanne-type soap operic passion novella, replete with jealous boyfriends, alluring lesbians, lecherous old perverts, powerful movie moguls and wide-eyed innocents. Technically, the film is quite good: it has excellent photography, taut editing and credible acting. Chantal Contouri (also from Thirst) is great as a femme fatal who leads the young adolescent headlong into decadence. In fact, Day After might have been an acceptable film if it was promoted truthfully as being one of those sordid grade-Z exploitation trash epics ala The Betsy, Bloodline, etc. But in purposefully deceiving the movie-going public into believing they are spending their \$4.00 on a blood, guts, 'n gore slash-em-up, The Day After Halloween is a banal film and an outright fraud. There ought to be a law against rip-offs like this!

## THE HOWLING: A NEEDLESS DELAY?

As mentioned in earlier issues of the GG, Joe (Piranha) Dante's long-awaited The Howling has been continually postponed from its original Oct. '80 release date due to post-production problems on some stop-motion animation sequences done by David Allen. Well, these problems were wrapped up by year's end and The Howling was given a "sneak preview" in Las Vegas during January of this year. The result? Avco Embassy was pleased by the positive audience reaction accorded the film, but they suggested that Dante cut all the animated werewolf sequences from the final release print. This comes as slightly disturbing news since the painstaking work on the animation is what was said to have caused the 5 month delay

in the first place. To have it all excised at this time would seem ludicrous. We have been informed, however, that at last month's "sneak preview" in New York, the animated sequences were still intact. The handful of people who attended that screening may be the lucky few who ever get to see Allen's work. Avco Embassy's hired publicity firm is claiming that "nothing was cut", but we have reason to believe that when The Howling finally opens in the area on Friday, March 13, it will be in an animationless version. It still promises to be a great flick, though, in any event...

## A SPACE BOMB

Galaxina, the latest directoral effort from William (Incredible Melting Man) Sachs is quite a frustrating film. For having been made on an extremely low budget, it is technically excellent; yet the most mundane of scripts and some very bad acting reduces it to a hackneyed failure. Basically, Galaxina closely resembles John Carpenter's Dark Star in that it attempts to satirize your average sci-fi space opera by depicting a crew of bumbling astronauts and their encounter with a robot/computer mission. Sach adds a female (played by the stunning Dorothy Stratten) for some sex appeal and then attempts to parody current sci-fi hits like Alien, Star Wars and Flash Gordon. It was a good idea, but the comedy in the film never rises above an embarrassingly juvenile level and the presence of the annoying Avery Schreiber as the crew's commander makes the whole film look like an elaborate Doritos commercial. However, the special effects are top-notch in both the outer space battle scenes as well as in some interesting alien make-up designs. With a little more thought given to the humor, this may have emerged as a quite funny, successful film. There are a few highlights in the flick (a fairly graphic cannibal restaurant sequence, Sachs' subtle parody of 1961's Angry Red Planet utilizing an planet where everything is in infra-red, brief clips of First Spaceship On Venus, etc.) and the late Stratten is great to look at throughout the film, but in total Galaxina is an unfunny bore.



## GORE GAZETTE

FREE Your Bi-Weekly Guide To Horror, Exploitation And Gore In The N.Y. Metro Area NO. 11

## SPECIAL ALL-WEREWOLF EDITION!!

## A HOWLING SUCCESS

Joe Dante's long-awaited The Howling tore into area theaters last Friday and brought with it a fresh new approach to the current crop of big-budget horror flicks that have lately become increasingly stagnant and predictable. The story-line is original and simple: a coven of werewolves disguised as a consciousness-raising group in the wilds of northern California tries to assimilate a TV newscaster and her husband into the "family." The couple slowly realizes that all is not right with this group and after the husband is transformed into a flesh-eating wolf, the wife alone must face the pack of werewolves in a spectacular climax. What makes The Howling rise far above other films is that it contains many qualities current horrors lack: the script breaks out of the traditional werewolf formula and all the limitations that go with it (we don't have to wait for a full moon before werewolf transformations occur, there is no boring pentagram mumbo-jumbo, etc.); Dante adds a unique touch of humor to the film that dates back to the old American International horror teenpix of the 50's; and so much effort has been put into the excellent special effects of Rob Bottin that not only do they look gruesomely realistic, they almost steal the thunder of the entire movie! As compared to current films that tend to adhere strictly to a proven formula, are usually dead serious and have mediocre effects, The Howling is by far the best film to emerge out of the past year's horror releases. Dante has a slick directorial style that should make him the horror director for the next few years to come. As an added highlight, Dante has cast many small roles and cameos throughout the film as sort of a knowing acknowledgement to horror film fanatics. If you don't blink, you may be able to spot Dick Miller (cast in the same role of Walter Paisley as in 1959's A Bucket Of Blood), Roger Corman (Dante's old boss), Forrest J. Ackerman (Joe wrote a great article as a kid in Famous Monsters #18, 1962), Kevin Mc Carthy and John Carradine, among others. Just so you don't think we're on Avco Embassy's payroll, there are a few minor complaints with The Howling. It gets off to a bit of a slow start; not until after about 30 minutes do things really start happening. Also, as mentioned before, (see G.G. 10) virtually all of David Allen's stop-motion animation sequences have been cut from the release print. In fact, total on-screen animation time in the entire film is under 15 seconds! But these problems notwithstanding, The Howling is full of enough gore, shocks, tension and laughs that it is highly recommended and should serve as a model for all horror flicks to come.



J. Carradine plays geriatric werewolf

## IL LUPE RIP-OFFO!

Tricked again! The Legend Of The Wolf Woman is yet another one of the countless Italian import rip-offs sprung on an unsuspecting movie-going public via misleading ad campaigns and poster art. In this case, Dimension Pictures (a California-based sleaze distributor who has given us gems like Dr. Black And Mr. Hyde and Invasion Of The Bee Girls) saw fit to buy this 1977 linguistic horror yarn, play up the werewolf angle in all advertising, and Americanize all the cast and crew member's names on the posters displayed outside the theaters (ie., star Annik Borrello becomes Anne Borel, director Rino di Silvestro is changed to R.D. Silver, etc.). Unsuspecting gore fans who are hoodwinked by this name switching plunk down their hard-earned cash, enter the theater and within two minutes can easily realize they've been sucked into supporting another Italian stinker. There's really nothing you can do once you get inside---ever try to demand a refund at a 42nd St. theater? Editorializing aside, Wolf Woman has a nice opening sequence: we see a naked, large-breasted woman passionately dancing within a circle of fire. Soon, she begins to jerk spastically, foam spews from her mouth and hair grows all over her body as she is transformed into the title



character. She stalks and brutally slays a villager by tearing a bloody mouthful of meat out of his throat and is subsequently trapped and burned at the stake by other villagers. With the end of this sequence, a narrator gravely tells us that "200 years later in Italy, the curse of the wolf-woman manifests itself in the lovely Danilla." This is the only explanation given as the entire werewolf theme is suddenly abandoned and we pick up the story of a modern-day female maniac as she sets about the countryside murdering men and women who try to sexually arouse her. As with other pizza operas, a boring sub-plot ensues as a mustachioed detective tries to hunt down this "possessed murderess". Wolf Woman is not as bad as other imports of recent memory since it does contain numerous effective scenes of violence, brutality and soft-core sex and its scant 71 minute running time doesn't really give it enough time to become unbearably dull. But because of the deceit surrounding its promotion and the fact that a wolf-woman is on-screen for less than five minutes in the entire film, Legend Of The Wolf Woman is nothing more than an inept dirty trick. Dimension, we owe you one....

# GORE GAZETTE

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## SON OF CAVEAT EMPTOR DEPT.

Because of last issue's special "all werewolf edition", we find ourselves falling a bit behind in keeping current with new film releases. In an attempt to get up to date, this G.G. will present brief capsule reviews of the many horror, gore and related films released during the past three weeks. A warning however: Except for perhaps one of the films listed below, all run the gamut from mediocre at best to downright awful. Gore completists may find a few of interest, but to quote ourselves back in G.G. #4 all should be approached on a "let the buyer beware" basis only...

**The Funhouse-** Universal Pictures is hawking this flick as "the horrifying new chiller from the director of *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*". It sure doesn't look like a Tobe Hooper film. *Funhouse* is just another one of those "teens trapped and menaced by a psycho" formula epics that lately seem to be released in slightly different variations nearly every couple of weeks. What makes this one slightly better is that the "psycho" in *Funhouse* is actually a mutated freak/monster who drools, snarls and snots disgustingly all through the film thanks to another superb make-up concoction by Rick Baker. But Tobe Hooper's direction is plodding and predictable, his shock timing displaced, and the gore level is way below what we have come to expect from him. (We only get to see one head being hatcheted and that is hidden by the dark shadows of the funhouse.) Even the 4 adolescents who are menaced are so obnoxious that we found ourselves cheering for the monster everytime he made a successful hit. After viewing *Funhouse*, perhaps critics will look upon Hooper's much-maligned *Eaten Alive* in a new light.

**Eyes Of A Stranger-** Unique characterization and subtle plot variations differentiate this rapist/slasher/strangler saga slightly from other similar fodder currently glutting the market. Lauren Tewes of *The Love Boat* is fairly convincing as a TV newswoman who discovers that her neighbor is the aforementioned r/s/s who signals his attacks via obscene phone calls. When no one believes her, she begins incessantly phoning the maniac herself; telling him that she knows who he is, what he is doing and that he should turn himself in (ala Wm. Castle's 1966 gem *I Saw What You Did*). Of course, the predictable showdown ensues with the expected false endings which seem to be a staple of these films today. But what makes *Eyes* interesting is the character of the killer, excellently played by John Di Santo. He is a quiet, neat, almost polite man who looks like a librarian. It just so happens that he likes to rape and murder women in his spare time. The antithesis of a Joe Spinell-type, Di Santo is very frightening as you realize you are surrounded by guys who look and seem to act like him every day. *Eyes* also contains sparse (though excellent) gore effects by Tom Savini (our favorite was a head being chopped off by a huge meat cleaver and then thrown into a fish tank) and a cruelly funny torture scene where the killer sadistically confuses a deaf, dumb and blind girl before he tries to rape her. Marginally recommended.

**Nocturna-** Who the hell is Mai Bonet? That's the question we asked as we left the 42nd St. theatre now showing a Mai Bonet double bill. (Hoodlums was the co-feature.) This horrendously unattractive, talentless Hawaiian witch plays Dracula's granddaughter who can only suppress her vampiric desires to drink blood when she is disco dancing! Horrid acting, sub-Galaxina level mundane humor, the most embarrassing special effects ever seen in a horror film, nude women who are so repulsive that they look deformed, a bloated Yvonne De Carlo, and a pathetic-looking John Carradine as Dracula (he hasn't looked this bad since *Vampire Hookers*) make this 1978 mess a must to avoid. Strictly for Plan 9 alumni only.

**New Year's Evil-** The psycho killer genre reaches its nadir with this abysmal dud. It features Roz Kelly (aka Pinky Tuscadero on *Happy Days*) as an aging punk-rock queen (?) hosting a New Year's Eve punk concert in L.A. whilst a killer snuffs out a victim each hour before midnight and promises to do in poor Pinky herself at the stroke of twelve. The virtual lack of hardly any demented or graphic killings and the over-all slickness of the film make it look almost like a made-for-TV. *Evil* is boring and predictable to the nth degree. As an added highlight (lowlight?), the L.A. punk rock bands depicted are hilarious- they play heavy metal sludge while wearing 3rd rate Kiss make-up. *Evil* is a total loser- but what else can you expect from an area that spawns bands like Black Flag?

**Where Time Began/Land Of No Return-** They didn't trick us this time! Upon viewing the poster outside the theater, we recognized *Time* as a new title for *Viaje Al Centro De La Tierra*, an old 1977 dubbed bomb from Spain that featured the most ludicrous reptiles since *King Dinosaur* and repellent plot to match. *Land* is also a re-titling of a 1977 film originally called *Challenge To Survive*. It starred William Shatner (at that time at a career low), was rated G, and was a poor attempt to cash in on the success of the then-popular *Wilderness Family* movie. Watch out for these two!

**Blood Orgy Of The Cannibal Ghouls-** Great new flick concerning a group of horror film fanatics who go on a won-ton, bloody killing spree. Their target? NYC area film critics whom they feel give unjust and slanted reviews to new horror releases. Highlights include: the throat slashing and eye gouging of a female critic of a "hip" east village weekly for giving *Blood Beach* a good review; the carving up and devouring (all shown in full on-screen view) of the bleeding entrails of a male critic for an arty Soho-area newspaper because he consistently applies high-brow standards to low-brow films. Opens to all area theaters April 1.



V.V. Film Critic Gets Hers In  
*Blood Orgy Of The Cannibal Ghouls*

# GORE GAZETTE

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Your Bi-Weekly Guide To Horror, Exploitation And Gore In The N.Y. Metro Area

No. 13

## DOUBLE DECEPTION

The current entry in the "let's deceive the movie-goers" sweepstakes comes from Dynamite Entertainment, a California-based sleaze outfit best noted for their never-ending stream of poorly-dubbed, 2nd rate kung-fu imports. What these wizards have done this time is to concoct a double-bill of one five year old flick and another one over eight years old, give each a new title and peddle them as "new" horror thrillers. The first, Holy Terror, is actually a 1976 film on its third time around with a third new title. Originally released under the title of Communion and lensed in Paterson, N.J. by the notorious Alfred Sole, (he touched on necrophilia in 1971's Deep Sleep and promises to bring beastiality to commercial theaters this summer with Tanya's Island featuring a lustful gorilla created by Rob Bottin) the film was re-released in 1978 as Alice Sweet Alice with an ad campaign designed to feature Brooke Shields who at that time had begun to draw critical attention for her performance in Pretty Baby. Dynamite has decided to really beat

a dead horse- since Brooke is now the controversial queen of Calvin Klein jeans, these shysters have re-filmed the flick's opening credits, retitling it Holy Terror and giving Shields total star billing. They also include an alluring "Blue Lagoon-ish" picture of her on all their posters and advertisements. The real deception lies in the fact that first, Shields was about 10 years old when she made Communion and bears no resemblance whatsoever to the callow nymph depicted in all Dynamite press. Secondly, she is only seen during the first 9 minutes of the film--if you arrive a bit late you will miss her entirely!! As for the film, it is mediocre at best. Its gore effects, which were considered quite graphic back in '76 seem relatively tame in today's Savini age. Only Sole's taut directing can really be commended- he fills the film with a pervading look of seediness and filth that usually escapes most filmmakers. (Then again, it was filmed on location in Paterson so he had lots of help...) Also, most of the film's shocks are very jolting and right on target. What ruins Terror is its amateurish, daytime



BABY BROOKE, "STAR" OF HOLY TERROR GETS SNUFFED OUT-9 MINUTES INTO THE FILM!!!

gap opera-like acting and a tired old plot-line risked straight out of every Italian import film from The Bird With The Crystal Plummage to Eye-All. (Choose the killer from a handful of suspects; it turns out to be who you'd least imagined...you know the tune.) Part 2 of this double deception is that Dynamite somehow acquired the rights to the old Amicus film The Vault Of Horror (1973). Again, they alter the opening credits, removing VOH and replacing it with a Tales From The Crypt Pt. II title, pretending it, too, is a "new" release. Most of our readers are familiar with this British film adaptation of the old EC comic book series, so we'll dispense with the critique. Suffice to say that if you ever see a dynamite film advertised-- hold on to your wallet and examine the film very carefully before surrendering your hard-earned cash--or you may be sorry. Late note: we have received word that Dynamite has also acquired the rights to another Amicus film, 1972's Asylum, and plans are afoot to re-release it here soon under the title of House Of Crazies. Be forewarned about this "new" film.)

#### AN ANEMIC EPIC

We were away this weekend and missed the sneak reviews of George Romero's much-touted Knight-riders. However, local gore fanatic and G.G. correspondent Gary Hertz managed to catch it opening night and kindly agreed to review it for us:

Here is a great scene early on in George Romero's Dawn Of The Dead where a woman embraces her husband, not knowing that he is a flesh-eating zombie. With a look of ravenous glee, her husband subsequently takes a deep bite out of shoulder, chomping blood and flesh deliciously. A great scene... Well, the main problem with Romero's new Knightriders is that it chews no such meat.

The gore content is not merely low, it is virtually non-existent. A well-intentioned film,

Knightriders spins the tale of a traveling baroque Renaissance group who flee American commercialism to stage fraternal jousting matches on motorcycles. Led by a "King Arthur" figure (Ed Harris), the "good" knights battle the "black" knights in true Camelot fashion. Soon, dissent arises between King Harris and Morgan, leader of the "black" knights (played by Tom Savini, gore master, who seems to have hung up his scalpel for this flick). Enter one loud-mouthed show-biz agent who lures away Morgan and his knights with the



Savini: He acts as well as he bleeds.

who lures away Morgan and his knights with the

promise of glamour and mega-bucks. Naturally, this success picture isn't all its cracked up to be and the "black" knights eventually return to their king. (Bet you knew that all along, right?) Knightriders lasts an overlong 2 hours and 20 minutes, slowed by many moralistic tirades from a strangely inconsistent Ed Harris. Other character developments in the film range from mildly interesting to downright trite. Viewers who want to play "spot-the-Romero-alum" during this epic can catch John Amplas (Martin), Ken Foree (Dawn) and Don Berry (Crazies), among others. Even current Romero collaborator Steven King makes a slightly funny cameo appearance as an obnoxious spectator. But only Tom Savini delivers a truly engaging, realistic performance. Knightriders tries awfully hard to make provocative social statements, but Romero's standard attack on American commercialism has never been so blatant, flat and tiresome. Many of the motorcycle stunts depicted in the film are viciously thrilling, yet the graphic gore and blood-letting that has become a staple of Romero product and always supplied a sense of brutal urgency in past gems (Dawn, Crazies, etc.) is noticeably conspicuous by its absence. The impressive imagery, action and relatively tame theme of Knightriders may attract a mainstream audience and mildly excite devout Romero fans, but will certainly disappoint (and probably bore silly) all gore connoisseurs who have come to expect a cinematic "blood-fix" from George.

(Ed. note: it is truly hoped that the recent rash of similarly-titled and themed films like Excalibur, Nighthawks, etc. will not cause Knightriders to become overlooked and/or confused by viewers, sending it into instant limbo ala 1973's sorely neglected Code Name: Trixie/ The Crazies.)

Many thanks to Michael Weldon for his plug in Psychotronic. Those of you unfamiliar with the publication might want to check it out-- its a weekly 10 pager that has been aptly described as "a sick TV Guide" and is chock full of interesting pictures, ad mattes, and information. Write to Michael at 341 E. 9th St., Apt.12, New York, N.Y. 10003 to find out more about it.

#### Coming attractions:

Within the next few weeks, look for the following reviews in upcoming G.G.s:

Friday The 13th Pt. II

Alligator (written by John "Howling" Sayles)

Scared To Death (alien-type gore fest)

The Hand and:

A possible G.G. showing of the elusive Blood Feast!! Watch for more info.

# GORE GAZETTE

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No. 14

## BOORMAN BRAVADO

With the release of Excalibur, director John Boorman has broken a directoral jinx which has plagued him for nearly a decade. Early successes that initially brought him critical acclaim (Having A Wild Weekend with the Dave Clark 5, Point Blank, Deliverance) soon changed to jeers and pans in the 70's as John turned lobster and churned out two insipid, symbolic, heavy-handed duds (Zardoz in 1974 and The Exorcist Pt. II: The Heretic in 1977) that were huge commercial failures. Well, Boorman should be bound for glory again with his latest effort. Excalibur recounts the legend of King Arthur and the Knights Of The Round Table in a speedy, fast-paced manner reminiscent of a sword-and-sorcery comic strip. Abandoning prosaic dialogue and using stark, almost crude sets, Boorman achieves a look and feel for this medieval period that has never been affected by any of the countless cinematic attempts at re-telling the familiar story. You might well ask why the G.G. would concern itself with this flick--since when do we care about style? Simple...the look, characterization and action in this film all result in it becoming a grandiose exploitation epic. It contains all the elements that get 'em howling on 42nd St.: extremely gory

murders, long fist-fight and battle sequences, fairly explicit sex scenes and even two instances of incest. Sleaze purists should not be put off by the advertising for Excalibur--its gore and bloodshed is bountiful and far surpasses the mild effects seen in many of today's horror releases (there is a scene where a raven pecks the bloody eyeball out of a hanged cadaver that is worth the price of admission alone). Boorman's direction is as taut and exciting as it has ever been and his screenplay collaboration with Rospo Pallenberg brilliantly adapts the pretentious classic Le Morte D'Arthur to include an element of sensationalism and tongue-in-cheek humor that keeps the film interesting and fresh for every minute of its near 2½ hour running time. But perhaps the star of Excalibur and the main source of its originality is Nicol Williamson, whose role as Merlin The Magician really steals the show. Instead of playing a straight mystic, Williamson depicts Merlin as a sly old deception master who would rather fool the populace of Camelot with his trickery and effrontery than to resort to the tiring task of casting spells. He puts just the right amount of humor into the role, yet never reduces the film to becoming overtly silly. In total, Excalibur is a surprising masterpiece; we had written Boorman off as a loser years ago and we respectfully owe him an apology. The upcoming crop of "sword-and-sorcery" epics scheduled for release this year (Conan, Bladerunner, etc.) will surely find Excalibur a tough act to follow.



KING ARTHUR GETS SPIKED BY HIS OWN SON/BROTHER, THE EVIL MORDRED, IN THIS SCENE FROM EXCALIBUR.

ious classic Le Morte D'Arthur to include an element of sensationalism and tongue-in-cheek humor that keeps the film interesting and fresh for every minute of its near 2½ hour running time. But perhaps the star of Excalibur and the main source of its originality is Nicol Williamson, whose role as Merlin The Magician really steals the show. Instead of playing a straight mystic, Williamson depicts Merlin as a sly old deception master who would rather fool the populace of Camelot with his trickery and effrontery than to resort to the tiring task of casting spells. He puts just the right amount of humor into the role, yet never reduces the film to becoming overtly silly. In total, Excalibur is a surprising masterpiece; we had written Boorman off as a loser years ago and we respectfully owe him an apology. The upcoming crop of "sword-and-sorcery" epics scheduled for release this year (Conan, Bladerunner, etc.) will surely find Excalibur a tough act to follow.

## A REAL HAND JOB

Remember a lurid little low-budgeter from 1963 called The Crawling Hand? It starred a pre-Virginian Peter Breck as an astronaut who accidentally gets his hand severed upon his re-entry landing to Earth. Of course, "radiation from space" endows the hand with a life of its own. It then spends the remaining 70-odd minutes of the film strangling people until it is finally devoured by a mad dog at a garbage dump in a sick little stomach-turning finale. Needless to say, this film was bad and very boring... But compared with The Hand, which opened to area theaters last

Friday, the aforementioned seems like Citizen Kane. Michael Caine plays comic strip artist Jon Lansdale who loses his drawing hand in an automobile accident. He then subsequently loses his job, wife, daughter, mistress and eventually his mind as he imagines that his lopped-off hand returns to destroy those who have abandoned him. Ho hum... Although framed in a horror context, The Hand is in reality nothing more than a psychological soap opera. Aside from the opening mutilation scene, (which surprisingly is quite graphic and deliciously disgusting) gore and violence is kept to a scant minimum. Instead, the film is constantly bogged by an alcoholic-looking Caine in what is probably the worst performance of his career. Even the much-touted visual effects of Carlo Rambaldi are ineffective and phony-looking. The only real interest the film may generate to anyone is a trivial one: the comic story-boards that Caine is seen drawing early on in the film were in reality done by Barrie Smith, the original artist of the Conan The Barbarian Marvel Comics books in the early 70's. The character depicted on the boards is a very Conan-looking young warrior named Mandro. Die-hard Smith fanatics may want to catch The Hand for the privilege of seeing a few minutes of his great art work, and gore junkies may get off on the brutal amputation sequence, but for the most part The Hand is a dreadful bore. Director Oliver (Midnight Express screenwriter) Stone should know better than to resurrect a film plot in the 80's that looked laughable back in the 60's. As far as we're concerned, The Hand gets the finger...



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## GORE GAZETTE

FREE | Your Bi-Weekly Guide To Horror, Exploitation And Gore In The N.Y. Metro Area | No. 15

## SLASHER OR SLASHEE?

Paramount Pictures' sequel to last summer's enormously successful Friday The 13th, imaginatively titled F.T.T. Pt. 2, broke all existing box office records by racking up a cool six million dollars its first weekend of release. We doubt very much that this success will continue, however, as word gets around as to the actual content of the film. The general consensus of most of the reviewers leaving the theater was that Pt. 2 was no more nearly as exciting and violent as the parent film. These movie-goers were entirely correct, as we later discovered that the Motion Picture Association Of America (MPAA) film rating board had forced 48 seconds of the film to be cut at the threat of its receiving an X rating on the basis of excessive violence. This might seem like much screen time, but virtually all the gore effects created by Carl Fullerton ended up on the cutting room floor. What remains is a pale imitation of Friday The 13th, containing almost the same plot-line, (camp counselors paced by revenge-bent killer) but substituting a now-pubescent Jason Voorhees as the mad mangler instead of his mother. We are subjected to



J. VOORHEES HOWLS RAGE AS HE REALIZES THE REAGAN-APPOINTED MPAA HAS BUTCHERED HIS LATEST FILM.

endless scenes of exposition leading up to each of the 10 slayings in the film, only to be disappointed by an obtrusive over-exposure everytime young Jason attacks, obscuring our view of all the demented proceedings but keeping the Reagan-appointed censor board content in the knowledge that we are being "protected" from viewing any overtly graphic violence. On the merits of this, Part 2 cannot be given a tot-

ally equitable review. A feature pictorial spread in the current issue of Fangoria magazine owed real promise for the flick, however almost none of the scenes depicted in the article ever made it to the final release print. What can be said about Part 2 is that although director Steve Miner seems to be able to adeptly handle a film that relies totally on abrupt jolts and surprising shocks, his end result is badly impaired by a cast of awful actors and the most banal horror screenplay written in the past few years. Writer

Ron Kurz should get feminists screaming for his blood with this one--it contains enough sexist dialogue and endless scenes of nubile disrobings for no apparent reason other than to flash some meat for the camera that even an old chauvenist like myself had to cringe. Editor Susan Cunningham (wife of Sean, who directed the first installment of F.T.T.) should be commended for the taut and fast-paced layout of the film which results in being its only real saving grace. But unfortunately, on the basis of its heavy censorship and the above-mentioned flaws, Part 2 cannot be recommended. Word-of-mouth had it that Fullerton's effects were exemplary, but it can't be discerned here. Hopefully, this summer's release of Wolfen will really show us what Carl can do. Poor Paramount has really born the brunt of this new anti-violence trend: first their excellent My Bloody Valentine was forced to submit to some heavy edits on key gore scenes and now Part 2 is virtually castrated by the slashing scissors. It makes one wonder about who is really protecting who from the demented slasher. Perhaps if enough bucks are siphoned away by disgruntled movie-goers, the majors (like Paramount, among others) will follow the course of current independent releasing companies (United Film Dist., Analysis Releasing, etc.) and begin imposing self-restricting warnings on their films and releasing them with no rating, yet fully intact, thus circumventing MPAA mutilation.

## RETURN OF A CLASSIC

The current re-release double-bill of Last House On The Left and House By The Lake might prove to be of interest to younger gore fans who may have missed them first time around. Left in particular is a monumental classic: released nearly a decade ago, it marked the first successful attempt at bringing the then-obsure H.G. Lewis sex/gore/sadomasochism school of filmmaking into the mainstream of contemporary American theaters. Prior to its release, films of this ilk were contained exclusively to skid-row grind houses where they were co-billed with porno flicks. Left is responsible for setting the tone of sickness and depravity that is still being imitated in today's films. Its production team reads like a Who's Who of 1980's gore kings: Left was directed by Wes Craven, (who later wrote and directed the excellent The Hills Have Eyes) produced and written by Sean Cunningham, (director of Friday The 13th) and photographed by Steve Miner (director of the current hit, Friday

the 13th, Pt.2). Surprisingly enough, 10 years later, the film still seems shocking and packs quite a wallop with its pervading sense of filth and sleaziness. Unfortunately, the prints now being shown in area theaters have some of the more gruesome gore scenes missing--the severing of Cyllis Stone's hand and her subsequent graphic disembowelment is nowhere to be seen. Also, Sadie's lesbian attack on the young teen Mari has been excised and is now only hinted at. Apparently, these scenes have been missing for a few years now. Does anyone out there know the story of the men, why, and how behind the censoring of these key scenes? I know they were all intact as late as 1975.... House By The Lake, on the other hand, is a vapid 1977 attempt by AIP to re-use the soft formula in a somewhat more sterilized, less-shocking, M.O.R. approach. Starring the obnoxious Linda Vaccarro, the film looks limp and pale in contrast to its billing-mate and can't even be commended on a historical comparison basis.

#### MONKEY ISLAND

A long-awaited Tanya's Island crept quietly into town last week and left less than a week later, virtually unnoticed. Part of the responsibility for its apathetic reception may be the fault of its New York-based distributor, Fred Baker Films. Ad campaigns for the film made it look like a confusing mix of sex (playing up D.D. Winters' prior role as a supporting cast member of Emmanuelle) and comedy (the ape depicted on the poster art is cross-eyed and has an inane grin plastered on its face). Unfortunately, it is neither. With its blend of rarely-paired genres, Tanya's Island emerges as a unique, original, highly-effective film that should please the exploitation connoisseur as well as the high-brow film artur. Basically, it spins the tale of a young woman named Tanya who, after being scorned by her unemployed artist lover, enters into a fantasy world where she and said lover are living on a lush, uninhabited tropical island. As in her real life, things begin to go bad with their relationship and Tanya seeks comfort, companionship and eventually torrid romance with Blue, a blonde ape who is the sole other inhabitant of the mystical island. Of course, Tanya's boyfriend doesn't really go for the idea of her romping with a monkey and a vicious love triangle war ensues between man and ape. Tanya's Island is rife with allegory and heavy-handed symbolism, yet director Alfred Sole's (Communion) beautifully liquid direction never allows the film to become devoured by its numerous attempts to become a dreaded "art" movie. Sole's roots are entrenched firmly in the porno, horror, and exploitative fields and his treatment of the sometimes overbearing script written by Canadian producer Pierre Brousseau makes for an effective



"down-to-earth" mixture of subtle imagery and blatant gore. The real interest most G.G. readers will have in the flick, however, is the remarkable ape suit designed and built by Rick Baker and Rob Bottin. Allegedly a low-budget production, Brousseau did not skimp on the \$ for the creation of Blue. The suit and facial prosthetics look so realistic that oftentimes it is hard to believe that you are watching an actor and not a real animal. The infamous bestiality sequences that supposedly kept Tanya's without a distributor for nearly 2 years are understated and relatively low-key. However, this may be the result of imposed cuts

to receive an R rating. Considering its highly-controversial subject matter and the surplandance of total nudity and graphic sex, Tanya's Island seems to walk a tenuous line on the R/X boundary. In total, although not as gory, graphically violent, or depraved as we expected, the film is curiously entertaining and should not be overlooked. Hopefully, another ad campaign can be mounted to save it from banishment into the land of obscure film limbo.